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TAGS: [IS KMDR MEDIA REACTION REPORT](#)  
SUBJECT: ISRAEL MEDIA REACTION

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SUBJECTS COVERED IN THIS REPORT:  
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- [1. Gaza and West Bank Disengagement Plan](#)
- [2. Global War On Terrorism](#)
- [3. Israel-China Arms Deals](#)

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Key stories in the media:  
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Leading media reported that last night the state budget bill passed the hurdle of the Knesset's Finance Committee, with 10 members in favor and 9 against. (Jerusalem Post reported that in a surprise move Tuesday, the Finance Ministry included 2.2 billion shekels -- around USD 510 million -- for disengagement in the 2005 budget discussed by the committee.)

This morning, Israel Radio and other media reported that the Knesset's Constitution, Justice and Law Committee approved, 9-8, a bill that would allow a national referendum on the disengagement plan. The bill will now be presented to the Knesset plenum for voting, although it seems unlikely that it will muster majority support. Jerusalem Post reported on a deal the 13 Likud "rebels" will offer PM Sharon today, according to which they will vote in favor of the budget in return for all Likud Knesset members voting for the referendum. Jerusalem Post expects Sharon to reject the deal.

Ha'aretz quoted a State Department spokesman as saying Tuesday that during their visit to the region this week, Deputy U.S. National Security Advisor Elliott Abrams and A/S David Welch are expected to ask the GOI about its plans to add some 3,500 housing units to Ma'aleh Adumim. The newspaper quoted the spokesman as saying regarding the construction plans: "U.S. policy is clear -- settlement construction must cease."

All media reported (lead stories in Yediot and Maariv) that last night far-right protesters blocked the Tel Aviv-Haifa highway near Netanya, blocking the traffic for 20 minutes. The police arrested 33 demonstrators at the site and another 66 at the Glilot junction north of Tel Aviv. (Numbers vary according to the media.) Several other demonstrations in different locations were also reported.

Jerusalem Post reported that Anna Kajumolo Tibaijuka, the visiting head of the UN agency charged with promoting sustainable urban planning, was noncommittal on whether she thinks the PA should use settlements evacuated by Israel to permanently house Palestinian refugees.

All media quoted remarks made by participants in the Arab League Summit in Algiers on Tuesday that Israel cannot expect peace and normalized ties with the Arab world if it does not make concessions and give up occupied land. Maariv's headline reads: "Conditional Normalization." The media noted that only 13 heads of state from the league's 22 members attended the summit. Gideon Kutz, Channel 2-TV's Paris correspondent, reported on the summit from Algiers. Maariv reported that in a speech he gave at a university in Qatar, MK Ahmed Tibi (Hadash-Ta'al) called on the Arab states not to hurry to improve relations with Israel.

All media (banner in Ha'aretz) quoted King Abdullah II of Jordan as saying in a meeting with Jewish American leaders in Washington Tuesday that Syria and Hizbullah are encouraging Palestinian activists to carry out

terror attacks against Israel, trying to divert attention from the situation in Lebanon and Syria. The King also said that Iran, Syria and Hizbullah are the greatest threats to stability in the Middle East. Ha'aretz quoted him as saying that he recently told Sharon that in case of a terrorist attack, Sharon should check carefully who is behind it to avoid Israeli retaliation against the wrong target. According to the newspaper, Abdullah was implying that, should a terrorist attack occur, Sharon would find that Hizbullah is responsible.

Ha'aretz quoted IDF Intelligence chief Brig. Gen. Yossi Kuperwasser as saying Tuesday before the Knesset's Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee that PA forces are foiling as many terror incidents as Israeli forces. However, Ha'aretz remarked that Kuperwasser, like Ya'alon who spoke after him, noted that the PA is not yet taking proactive steps to collect arms from the gunmen of the armed organizations. Leading media reported that Mofaz has ordered a closure on the territories during the Purim holiday, which will be celebrated this weekend.

Jerusalem Post and Ha'aretz reported that the Jerusalem Magistrate's Court handed down a guilty verdict Tuesday in the case of American-born Rabbi Arik Ascherman, who tried to prevent Israeli bulldozers from demolishing illegally built Palestinian homes.

British Ambassador to Israel Simon McDonald was quoted as saying in an interview held with Jerusalem Post Tuesday that Britain is actively trying to persuade EU member states to freeze all of Hizbullah's assets, following a change in government policy.

Ha'aretz and other media reported that this week a delegation from the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG), a group of nuclear supplier countries that seeks to contribute to the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons through the implementation of guidelines for nuclear exports and nuclear-related exports, visited Israel for the first time and discussed with officials from the Israel Atomic Energy Commission (IAEC) and the Foreign Ministry ways to further cooperation in containing the dissemination of nuclear equipment and materials to "problematic" countries.

All media reported that on Tuesday, before the Knesset's Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee, Chief of Staff Moshe Ya'alon harshly censured Sharon and Defense Minister Shaul Mofaz over the conditions of his apparent dismissal. Ya'alon said that the decision was "unjustified." The media noted that politicians across the board demonstrated sympathy for Ya'alon's comments, and that the committee has requested clarifications from Mofaz on the matter.

All media quoted Israeli officials as saying Tuesday that Russian President Vladimir Putin is scheduled to arrive in Israel on April 27 for a two-day historic visit as a guest of President Moshe Katsav.

Jerusalem Post reported that as of Tuesday a press club for Israeli and Palestinian journalists, the Mideast Press Club, will operate at Jerusalem's American Colony Hotel. The club was founded by Felice Friedson, CEO of The Media Line Ltd., an American nonprofit multimedia news agency that covers the Middle East.

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**1. Gaza and West Bank Disengagement Plan:**  
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**Summary:**  
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Yahad party leader and Geneva Accord co-initiator Yossi Beilin wrote in popular, pluralist Maariv: "A joint abstention [in the Knesset's vote on the 2005 budget], of both Shinui and Yahad, will ensure the implementation of the withdrawal from Gaza without the two parties having to support the budget."

**Block Quotes:**  
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"Shinui, Let's Vote Together"

Yahad party leader and Geneva Accord co-initiator Yossi Beilin wrote in popular, pluralist Maariv (March 23): "Yahad's enthusiasm concerning the withdrawal from Gaza is far less than that of Shinui. According to the testimony of Sharon himself (New York Times, April 16, 2004), his decision to leave Gaza was made in light of the Geneva initiative and his fear that this initiative

-- which he deems dangerous -- will be imposed on the parties. Therefore, we should have been the first to oppose his unilateral plan.... A joint abstention [in the Knesset's vote on the 2005 budget], of both Shinui and Yahad, will ensure the implementation of the withdrawal from Gaza without the two parties having to support the budget. This is a proposal I raised a few weeks ago, and it still stands. This will be the most responsible and wise path for the two opposition parties, who wish to make the withdrawal possible -- not to obstruct it by toppling the budget, but also not to lend a hand to this bad budget. I propose to make this joint decision immediately, put an end to the turmoil in the system, prevent problematic payments from being made to various random supporters, and put behind us the affair of hunting for supporters for the budget, and look forward to the difficult challenges that await us. But I have some difficulty understanding the logic that guides the present government."

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12. Global War On Terrorism:  
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Summary:  
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Yoav Frummer wrote from New York in popular, pluralist Maariv: "A review of the lessons produced by [the late American statesman George] Kennan teaches that today, his legacy is as important as ever. In the same way it helped win the Cold War, it can now help win the war on terror."

Block Quotes:  
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"Cold War, Then and Now"

Yoav Frummer wrote from New York in popular, pluralist Maariv (March 23): "[The late U.S. statesman George] Kennan will be forever remembered as the man who laid the foundations of the U.S. foreign policy that won the Cold War.... A review of the lessons produced by Kennan teaches that today, his legacy is as important as ever. In the same way it helped win the Cold War, it can now help win the war on terror.... Kennan foresaw the current challenge in Iraq: it is not enough to build democratic institutions. It is more important to instruct [local people] to make a correct use of those institutions and to teach them to overcome obstacles.... Kennan's most important prediction may have been his recognition of the factor that eventually brought down the Soviet Union: 'Communism is akin to a cancerous leech that only feeds on sick tissues,' said Kennan, 'thus bearing the factor that will cause its collapse.' In accordance to that view, it would be difficult to ignore the destructive character of Islamic extremism, which equally holds the key of its fall -- its utter reliance on distress, envy, oppression, and frustration in the Arab world. The moment it will be prevented from harboring those feelings, the extremist legitimacy goading terror will cease."

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13. Israel-China Arms Deals:  
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Summary:  
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Senior columnist and chief defense commentator Zeev Schiff wrote in independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz: "A high-ranking Pentagon official has declared that Israel has to choose between the U.S. and China, an outlandish comment that deserves no response."

Block Quotes:  
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"The Americans Are Going Too Far"

Senior columnist and chief defense commentator Zeev Schiff wrote in independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz (March 23): "[European newspapers] doggedly insist that Israel is the second-biggest seller of arms to China, after Russia, and that the Israeli arms sales total USD 1.25 billion a year. It sounds like an impressive accomplishment for the state, but a thorough examination in Israel reveals different numbers. Since 2000, Israel has sold to China, through 164 Israeli companies, defense equipment at an approximate value of only USD 35 million. Since 2003, when the U.S.-Israel mechanism for disclosure of weapons sales to China was

set up, total sales from Israel to China have amounted to some USD 20 million. The lesson is that one should take reports of the 'professional' press with a grain of salt.... The transaction that is now the bone of contention between Israel and the U.S. is the sale of about 100 Harpy combat UAVs (unmanned aerial vehicles) in 1999, for about USD 70 million. The Americans allege that Israel is also engaged in upgrading these UAVs, and that it concealed facts about the transaction from the U.S. This is not the first time Israel has found itself in a crisis related to arms sales to China.... One of the crises, which involved the ostensible sale to China by Israel of Patriot missile secrets, was occasioned by a hysterical American

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attitude. High-ranking Israel Air Force officers now say they are coming up against furious allegations by the Americans, who contend that Israel is ostensibly training Chinese combat pilots. A high-ranking Pentagon official has declared that Israel has to choose between the U.S. and China, an outlandish comment that deserves no response."

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